

# How to file a complaint

You need to complain effectively in order to get results. Once you are certain that you have a problem you can't solve alone, complain—and do it quickly. The faster you complain, the better your chances for a satisfactory settlement.

- Pursue your complaint promptly.
- Go to the seller first, taking the merchandise along if possible. Talk to the person who sold you the product or service. If this person cannot help you, ask to speak with a supervisor, then the store manager or owner.
- Identify yourself.
- Be calm, courteous and friendly. Do not threaten.
- Explain the problem clearly. Be specific as to what you want—a replacement, a refund or repairs. Fill out a consumer complaint form and take a **copy** of it with you. If you don't have a form, call the Bureau of Consumer Protection at: (800) 422-7128.
- Be prepared. Have copies of documents in order; contracts, warranties, receipts, advertisements, canceled checks, charge slips. Provide copies, but **keep originals.**
- Get names of everyone you talk to—clerk, manager, etc.
- Listen carefully to the person's explanation and what is offered to you as a settlement. Remember you may have to compromise. However, don't be put off if the seller gets upset or says your complaint is unimportant.
- If you have to write a letter, keep it neat and to the point or use the consumer complaint form. Send copies of important documents, **do not send originals.** Give the business a deadline for their response, but be reasonable. Allow two to three weeks. Provide the names of offices, agencies, or associations you intend to go to for help if your problem isn't solved.
- Keep cool. Circle the deadline date on your calendar. If you haven't heard from the business by then, send a copy of your completed form and papers to the Bureau of Consumer Protection—the address is on the back of the complaint form. If you have questions about the form or what papers to include, please call: (800) 422-7128.

## What happens to your complaint?

The role of the Bureau of Consumer Protection is to assure that business practices are fair. Once we receive your complaint, it is entered into our computer database and given a file number. That number should be on all correspondence related to your complaint.

A consumer specialist or investigator will contact the business about your complaint. Although we cannot force a business to resolve a complaint, our contact with the company often results in a solution to a consumer's problem.

(over)

If we decide your complaint should be handled by another agency, we will forward your complaint to the appropriate agency and tell you where we sent it.

If we believe the business may have violated state consumer laws, we will contact the business and may also start an investigation. In some situations, we may send the business a formal warning notice. If it is a serious and widespread violation, we may recommend the case for prosecution to the Department of Justice or a district attorney.

Further action is their decision. Our investigations may lead to prosecutions which can result in convictions, fines, imprisonment or restitution to victims. However, judgments and money awards can only be made by the court system.

Please remember that consumer laws only provide protection in some areas. We cannot give legal advice or serve as your private attorney. If the business you complained against refuses to settle your complaint, you might consider:

- discussing your complaint with a lawyer in private

- practice, or
- taking action in Small Claims Court if it has the power to hear your complaint.

**For more information,**  
contact the Bureau of  
Consumer Protection at:

**(800) 422-7128**

**FAX: (608) 224-4939**

**TTY: (608) 224-5058**

**E-MAIL:**  
**datcphotline@datcp.state.wi.us**

**WEBSITE:**  
**<http://datcp.state.wi.us/>**

Keep this page for your records.

i:\cpic\facts\hwtf1127 1/00

## Sample Complaint Letter

		Your address Your city, state, zip code Date
		Appropriate person Company name Street address City, state, zip code
		Dear Company President:
State your purchase	_____	Last week I purchased (or had repaired) a (name of product with serial or model number or service performed). I made this purchase at (location, date and other important details of the transaction).
Name product and serial or model number or service	_____	
Include date and location of purchase & other details	_____	Unfortunately, your product (or service) has not performed satisfactorily (or the service was inadequate) because (give history of the problem).
State problem	_____	
Give history of the problem	_____	Therefore, to solve the problem, I would appreciate your (here state the specific action you want). Enclosed are copies ( <b>NOT</b> originals) of my records (receipts, guarantees, warranties, canceled checks, contracts, model and serial numbers, and any other documents).
Ask for satisfaction	_____	
Enclose copies of all documents	_____	I am looking forward to your reply and resolution of my problem, and will wait three weeks before seeking third-party assistance. Contact me at the above address or by phone at (home and office numbers here).
Ask for action within reasonable time	_____	
Include your address, work and home phone numbers	_____	Sincerely,
<b>Keep copies of your letter and all related documents and information</b>		Your name